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UNCLAS HARARE 000952

SIPDIS

AF/PD FOR COX AND ROBERTSON, AF/S FOR KRAFT AND SCHLACHTER,
AF/RA FOR SWANN, INR/R/MR, NSC FOR JENDAYI FRAZER

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REPORT EDITOR ARRESTED; HARARE

Geoff Nyarota, Editor-in-Chief of Zimbabwe's only independent daily "The Daily News," was picked up by the police on April 15 on allegations of publishing a false news item on the outcome of the disputed March 2002 presidential poll. Nyarota was taken to the Harare Central Police Station where the police recorded a warned and cautioned statement from him before releasing him on the same day. According to the lead article in the April 16 edition of the "Daily News," Nyarota will be charged under the newly enacted Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act for having falsified information on the outcome of the presidential results. Last Wednesday (April 10) the "Daily News" carried a story accusing the Registrar-General Tobaiwa Mudede of announcing different presidential results on the national broadcasting station, ZTV, and in other media. The paper carried the offending story under the headline "Mudede Tape proves Mugabe lost election." If found guilty, Nyarota will be liable, according to the Act, to a fine not exceeding Z\$100,000 or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding two years.

WHITEHEAD